

I'd like to make it is it's been a frustrating experience for me, as it has for many of you, because we receive these phone calls, and all of them purport to be just individual parents who happen to be passing by the Capitol and saw a copy of LB 245 and read it and they're real concerned about it. Obviously, it's an organized effort when as many of you receive the number of phone calls that you have. But unlike other organized efforts, we have not had the opportunity to sit down with people and say, okay, what are your real concerns and what can we do to address them. Earlier this week or last part of last week, I don't know, I did come across a draft of some amendments, they were not brought to me by anybody saying, here, react to these, they were brought in. And what they purport to do is to add to the bill certain clarifications of primarily the sort of things that I just got through saying the bill doesn't do. Unfortunately, the drafting of them goes much further than I would like to go in it. Unfortunately, nobody came in and said, what can we do with these amendments. I'm just saying here to the individuals out there that may have a concern, if, after we pass 245, keep in mind this is a lengthy process that's being established, some emissaries from this group want to come in and sit down around the table and say, this is what we'd like to have in the bill to guarantee that our negative concerns won't happen, I'll be happy to visit with them. And if we can reach agreement on the proper language to guarantee these things that we've talked about before don't happen, I'll be happy to introduce a bill next year to deal with those concerns. Third, it is critical, this bill is critical to establish a concept known as accountability in public education. Public education is under attack, some of it justified, some of it not justified, some of it applicable to Nebraska, some of it nonapplicable to Nebraska. Public education, though, needs some changes, needs some improvement. We spent over a billion dollars in Nebraska, in elementary-secondary education, a billion point two dollars. We have precious little information, state policymakers, as to how effective that is. We hear occasionally, we need to do a better job of teaching math. We, as state policymakers, really don't know what math skills our students have, what math skills they don't have. It's critical that we develop that information. This will be developed through a Nebraska citizens panel, that will first say what they want students to do; second, they will determine how...how we test whether those kids have that. What we do with that information afterwards then will be up to future policymakers. Nothing triggers. We don't establish a state curriculum, none of that sort of thing happens. Final point I